842 differences can be found here, although they are less apparent to
855 a European observer since we usually approach the natives as a
152 group and our contact with them is often too impersonal.

2. Abortion

●847 A great enemy of maternal love is the practice of abortion, which has always been known to the Nkundó. Here we cannot describe all the prescriptions used for that purpose. It will be sufficient to enumerate the reasons for which they have recourse to this practice. They are as follows:

1) A woman's lasciviousness: the procreation and subsequent care of a child to some extent prevent the indulging in carnal pleasures. Formerly this cause of abortion was nonexistent or very [178] rare. Needless to say, it has become more common, especially in the centers where it is constantly on the increase and where, in addition, occasional or regular "housekeepers" learn new means of sterilization and abortion.

2) A woman's antipathy or persistent anger toward her husband may encourage her to prevent conception or destroy its effect.

3) An excessive weakening of the mother's organism caused by a large number of conceptions and childbirths at too short intervals.

4) The encumberance and the difficulty of watching, carrying, and taking care of many small children -- bálota bokekesano [467] [535] wǎ bǎna nsátélá nsátélá. This reason is especially important for well-known dancers.

It goes without saying that several of these motives may be combined in the same person. For instance, I knew of a woman who aborted at the time of her eighth child. Her recurrent pregnancies, together with continuous work, had greatly reduced her strength. A palaver with her husband was the last straw; she decided to get rid of the fruit she carried in her body.

Outside of these exceptions the natives of this country ardently desire their own continuation through a large number of progeny. (1)

[184]

1. The same is not true elsewhere. Examples to that effect are cited from regions that are

847 [184] already more "civilized," such as the neighborhood of Coquilhatville and the Losanganya region.

847 848 Attention should be drawn to the danger of an increase in abortions for a new reason, namely the shame of giving birth outside of wedlock. As we have seen in Chapter I, Part II, Article IV, 3, premarital pregnancies have existed since time immemorial without resulting either in remorse or in palavers. Through the teaching of Christian morality, the feeling of shame must sooner or later be extended to this phenomenon. In explaining the evil of fornication, care should therefore be taken to insist on the fact that transgressing the Fifth Commandment by abortion is a far greater evil.

847 843 Voluntary abortion is not considered a moral error by the Nkundó. (2) In their eyes an imperfectly formed fetus, not viable,

2. An attitude which also exists in Europe at the present time, according to Haenecour in Kultuurleven, Vol. 6, no. 1, p. 21 (1935), and the brochure by Prof. D. Schockaert quoted there.

is not yet a man. It is only a human being in the process of formation, in potentia. Hence the custom of burying the aborted child 847 in the [468] hut or quite near it. Thus the spirit responsible for the [766] pregnancy will see that it is respected and repeat its benevolent [774] action. (1)

1. Others explain this custom by saying that the fetus already has a soul which remains near the tiny body and will take the first opportunity to re-enter the mother's body.

But if it is voluntary an abortion is always a wrong against family and society, for it deprives the family of a member on whom

847 they could count. Nevertheless, if it happens to a young unmarried mother, little or no fuss is made over it because no one can feel wronged; at most the culprit is scolded. For a married woman, on the other hand, it is one of the most serious infractions. Her husband has an immediate right to the fetus that would have become his child. He cannot beat or mistreat the offender in punishment, for her condition will not permit violence, but he can abandon her to her fate by refusing her all assistance, in particular by refusing to bring her firewood, the heat of which she greatly needs under such circumstances. For she has done him an enormous wrong and has acted with real malice (a<u>ɔ̂</u>njokel'inkúnyá, he says), since he married her chiefly so that she would give him descendants. If she dies it is her own fault. Even her family will not support her, for [682] they would be accused of being involved in the crime; inevitably they would lose the case and be condemned to indemnify the husband.

843 An abortion which is ascertained to be involuntary [i.e., a miscarriage] is treated like an accident or an illness and the appropriate legal stipulations are applied to it. Thus if it happens while the woman is at her parents' home, the responsibility for it falls on them. Usually the palaver is settled in a friendly manner; the family makes a few <u>nkomí</u> payments, and the question is closed. If relations between the husband and his son-in-law are somewhat strained, the dispute may be drawn out and may result in the breaking up of the marriage. If the woman dies from the accident, the rules given in Article X of the preceding chapter come into play. [469]

Article II. Conception and Pregnancy

842 833 The Nkundó have only a partial notion of the phenomena of conception. They are well aware of which acts cause the procreation of children. They have a perfect knowledge of anatomy and a rich vocabulary pertaining to sexual life. But they know only as much about physiological processes as experience can teach them. Furthermore, they believe that the act of procreation must be repeated several times in order to produce its natural result. Note,

853 The child is given to a wet nurse (a kinswoman, a stranger, a Botswa woman, depending on who is available).

847 If the mother's body shows no signs of evil-doing or of
845 "the hatred of others," it is thought that her death was caused
843 by evil spells on the part of the child. Thereupon some kill the child to prevent it from doing harm during its whole life; others, on the contrary, spare it despite everything.

843 If the husband (for it is he above all who is involved, since
837 he is most exposed to possible lapses) has unfortunately been guilty of misconduct, his wife has only a slim chance [478] of salvation. Nevertheless, it is still possible for her to be saved, on condition that from then on her husband abstain from any sexual act and from all the accidental gestures and actions described above. The least he can do under these circumstances is to inform his wife of his indiscretion so that she can take precautions. If he wants to
[672] ward off any possibility of causing his wife's certain death, he sends her home and gives his father-in-law a pledge (ndanga) through which he recognizes his guilt and shows his intention to assume the entire responsibility for his misdeed. An upright man prefers to act in this fashion, for he never knows whether one day he will not inadvertently violate one of the prohibitions.

B. The child's death is the result of the putrefaction of
853 the mother's milk, the mother being thus incapable of nursing.
837 As in the preceding case, the offense is a priori imputed to the husband -- isé aɔoma bɔna la ndota. (1) Since he has wronged no

[153]

1. Ndota is an illness caused by the violation of prescriptions of a sexual nature (See Chapter I, Part II, Article IV, 2, A).

one but himself, no palaver ensues; the "natural" punishment is sufficient. This does not mean that he is not the object of evil tongues; people point at him and at times remind him of his misdeed. To remove the blame from himself, he can resort to